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INFO RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 4566
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS JERUSALEM 000050

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

FROM THE CONSUL GENERAL
NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA, PRM FOR PRM/ANE, NSC FOR
ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND; PLEASE PASS TO USAID FOR
KUNDER/MCCLOUD/BORODIN AND TO USAID/OFDA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY DECLARATION FOR GAZA

REF: 2008 STATE 116623

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see para. 6.

Situation

12. (SBU) The Israeli Defense Forces initiated military action against Hamas in the Gaza strip on December 27. IDF ground forces entered Gaza on January 3. Since the initiation of military action, large numbers of civilians throughout Gaza have been severely affected. As of January 6, more than 600 people have died, 25 percent of whom are estimated to have been civilians, and more than 15,000 people have been displaced. Electrical, health, water and sewer systems have all been damaged and are on the verge of collapse. The majority of the population relies on humanitarian aid to meet basic needs. The U.S. Government has already offered to evacuate any U.S. citizen who wishes to depart Gaza. Ongoing military operations and terrorist rocket and mortar fire have made the provision of assistance increasingly difficult.

Background

13. (SBU) The current situation in Gaza is of such a magnitude that is beyond the ability of the Palestinian Authority and international organizations to respond adequately. Gaza borders are sealed off by Israeli and Egyptian authorities. Basic utilities -- water, sewage, electricity, communications -- are severely degraded and tens of thousands are without the most basic of human needs. Food supplies are limited and international assistance agencies report that their ability to deliver foodstuffs has been severely limited due to the security situation. Civilian casualties, now put at over 150, and suffering are mounting. Over 15,000 people have sought refuge in temporary shelters set up by UN agencies.

14. (SBU) Post has confirmed with the Palestinian Authority that it will accept USG assistance. It is in the interest of the USG to provide assistance for humanitarian purposes but also to maintain the political viability of the two-state solution and the progress achieved in the peace process since the November 2007 Annapolis conference.

15. (SBU) While USAID currently has resources available to provide assistance, the scope of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is extensive and reconstruction requirements are likely to exceed the resources available. USAID's current programs are focused on the West Bank, and these will need to continue and perhaps expand under these circumstances.

Declaration of Humanitarian Emergency

¶6. (SBU) Based on the current situation and ongoing needs, I declare that a humanitarian emergency of significant magnitude exists in Gaza sufficient to warrant additional assistance pursuant to an emergency declaration.

WALLES